Social Media Impact to 4-5 Star Hotels in Chalkidiki

Tseliou Kalypso

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Student Name: Kalypso Tseliou
SID: 1109150034
Supervisor: Dr. Korina Katsaliaki, Dr. Eleni Mavragani
I hereby declare that the work submitted is mine and that where I have made use of another’s work, I have attributed the source(s) according to the Regulations set in the Student’s Handbook.

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Abstract

This dissertation was written as a part of the MSc in Hospitality and Tourism Management 2015-2017 at the International Hellenic University.

The central objective of this thesis is to examine the impact of Social Media tools to 4 and 5 star Hotels in Chalkidiki.

It is widely known that the Internet is a constantly evolving tool that is a part of the everyday life of people as well as most modern businesses. More and more people are using the Internet for personal or business purposes. The expansion of the Internet and the need for continuous communication created the social media that have not only made an appearance but also prevailed in the present time. As is natural, the tourism industry could not remain unaffected by this trend, as a result to adopt the new developments. That kind of tools have become one of the most important means for interacting with the customer and play a very important role in advertising, development and profitability of a tourist business (especially for hotels). Purpose of this paper is to get to know the social media, how entrepreneurs can use them to promote their tourist businesses, or the services they offer, also the interaction social media managers and the customers have through social media. Therefore, understanding the role social media play in every kind of business and especially in tourism industry.

Finally, because this dissertation completes my master studies, I would like to thank all of my professors especially my supervisors Dr. Korina Katsaliaki and Dr. Eleni Mavragani for being such an inspiration, motivation and for sharing their knowledge and experiences with me, as well as all the academic staff of the University.

Keywords: Social Media, Social Media tools, Tourism, Hotel Industry, Internet, Chalkidiki, Greece, 4 and 5 stars Hotels

Kalypso Tseliou

12 / 2017
1. Introduction

Nowadays the Internet has completely changed the everyday life. As well as the way hotels act and operate is affected, in other words hotels adapting their selves to this change. New technology tools are essential for the operation of the contemporary companies. The new technological tools, including mobile applications and social media platforms, are usually helping companies to fulfill their marketing purposes. Very important role has the appearance of social media platforms in the marketing field.

The recent years in Greece we can see that almost all hotels are trying to keep an eye to the various market trends and to conform with them, while the previous years the percentage of the hotels that paid attention to the latest market trends was smaller. Something like that, effects to the way hotels operate nowadays, this is important not only for the hotel sector but for all the contemporary businesses in Greece at the moment, companies have to go with the flow in order to survive and be compatible with the latest technology and market trends. All those market trends showing constant ascending way that hotels should adopt in order to keep their customers satisfied and to meet their needs.

The focus of this study is to examine the impact social media have, to four and five star hotels in Greece, especially in Chalkidiki, also to explore how the hotels take advantage of their existence. Finally, this research tries to investigate how the communication through social media effect on sales and marketing in tourism sector.

2. Literature Review

The literature review chapter probes the history of social media, their first appearance in general and especially in the Tourism sector in Greece, in the region of Chalkidiki. Additionally, identifying the current trends and strategies that social media managers use.

In this chapter will be analyzed all the basic definitions that relate to the theme of the current dissertation. This analysis is intended to be understood and definitions will be widely used throughout the dissertation, in order to be possible to understand in depth without difficulties the following research as it will be developed in the next chapters.

In this investigation papers and scientific resources were selected, that refer to use of social media in the tourism sector, focusing on the impact that they have to the four and five star hotels in general also on those located in Chalkidiki.
2.1 What Tourism is

Before the analysis, it would be significantly helpful a reference to the concept of tourism as well as the importance tourism has nowadays. First, the term “tourism” used often for the description of the travel sector. In general travelling is multidimensional, creates memorable images and several unique experiences, to anyone who has the opportunity and ability to accomplish it. It’s about a broad concept, including the term “tourism”, movement of people for a variety of reasons, that could be for business, leisure, personal reasons and many other.

Travelling as a concept, is known by the prehistory period of human activity while tourism is a socio-economic phenomenon of contemporary industry and differs from travelling to both quality and comfort.

Tourism is not a phenomenon of the recent decades of modern civilization, but many decades ago, leisure trips and cruises were organized. Some of the new data that have emerged are the size of the contemporary mass tourism, the type and nature of tourism services, the organization and the way tourism businesses operate, the emphasis placed on the tourism industry from the government or Member associations as well as private entrepreneurs.

The first definition of tourism was given by Guyer –Feuler in 1905, he described tourism as : “A phenomenon unique to modern time which is dependent on the people’s increasing need for a change and relaxing, the wish of recognizing the beauties of nature and art and the belief that nature gives happiness to human beings and which helps nations and communities’ approaching to each other thanks to the developments in commerce and industry and the communication and transportation tools’ becoming excellent.”

Many years later the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) gave a new definition of tourism: “Tourism comprises the activities of persons traveling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business and other purposes.” (UNWTO).  

The definitions above give some basic characteristics of tourism, for instance: Tourism, in principle, involves a journey, which can last less than a day like a daytrip or visit, or more including overnight stay. Also, it can be a domestic travel taking place within the national borders or an international tourism trip outside the national borders. Travelling requires the use of means of transport where cover the travel needs of travelers like rail, road, air or sea transport. Further overnight stays require the existence of the tourist accommodation like hotels, motels, apartments or rooms. The existence of several other businesses is important to meet secondary needs of travelers, such as: souvenir shops, traditional restaurants etc.

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Based on the above data, concludes that accommodation units play an important role in tourism industry. That is why there are many hotel units in Greece, in the specific case, especially in Chalkidiki which is based on the economy of the tourism industry.

2.2 The influence of Technology and Internet in Tourism Sector

It is an inescapable fact that the recent years the rapid development in the field of telecommunication and computer networks have led to the development of networks and, above all, to prevalence of the Internet.

The capabilities offered by the Internet to its users are many and are discrete in various aspects of personal and social activity. Until recently the idea that the average consumer would have done the shopping of the week just from his computer screen with a click, looked more like a science fiction scenario.

The aim of this assignment is to present the way in which this high-powered web strength is applied to tourism industry.

Nowadays, potential tourists choose to do their “shopping” in this case (reservations, booking cars, guides etc.) through the amazing and up to now inconceivable opportunities offered by the Internet. That of course means, that day by day tourists become more dynamic, also demanding better information.

It could be said that is observed a change from the traditional tourist packages which tourist operators created, and distribute through travel agencies to the choice of tourist to plan and schedule their trips alone by searching information and booking online from the comfort of their home. In other words, consumers can choose and detect by themselves the appropriate information and buy tourist services that suit their needs best.

Taking into consideration all the above facts it could be easily said that e-tourism not only made its appearance in the tourist industry, but even more has prevailed in it.

“E-tourism is the digitisation of all the processes and value chains in the tourism, travel, hospitality and catering industries that enable organisations to maximise their efficiency and effectiveness.” (Dimitrios Buhalis,2003)

Electronic tourism is defined as the use of Technologies Information and Communication (ICT) in the tourism industry. This is an emergent field, which provides opportunities offered by the Internet and other technologies to people who wish to travel. Consumers can to find out, to look for, to compare and to choose any tourist service they want, such as: hotel accommodation, means of transport such as car rental, ferry and air tickets.

Through e-tourism, the entire tourism industry is affected, including tourists, travel agents, businesses, tour operators and travel web sites and all the cooperation that is developed between destinations and tourist suppliers.
In tourism industry, first come airlines accounting for 50% of the total market, due to the development of low-cost companies creating an essential competition in this area. In second place come hotel units, rental car services come third offering services and products all over the Internet.

Lastly, it is noticeable that consumers prefer and choose much more personalized special offers instead of the typical mass tourism packages.

“In e-tourism are included all the applications of intranet and extranet as well as strategic and marketing issues related to the use of technology.”

To be completely understood all the above data it is necessary to mention all the basic sectors of internet. in particular, will be mentioned not only the terms of social media (which is the subject of the current dissertation) but a small reference to the e-commerce will be followed which role is particularly decisive for the tourism sector.

E-commerce today is one of the most important technological applications, this is why makes such an impression, causing the public interest. E-commerce causes changes to the structure and the fundamental principles of operation of the economic system, establishing non-efficient the usual management and business operation models.

“According to The Economist as electronic commerce, or widely known E-commerce consists of electronic business transactions related to the purchase and delivery of goods and services.” In other words it is based on electronic transmission of data without the physical presence of seller and buyer being necessary.

E-commerce includes all the web processes of development, promotion, sale, delivery, service and payment for goods and services. The range of exchanges that conducted electronically, has grown with the wide use of Internet.

At this stage, it would be useful to point out that tourism is an industry which by its nature is intended not only to enable potential customers but also requires application of modern information and communication technologies through the development of electronic commerce.

There are some basic characteristics of tourism industry that prove how important is e-commerce for instance: The significant geographical distance between the provider and the buyer. The potential buyers may be in a different continent, which requires transactions to be accomplished in different corresponding hours. The tourism product is a mixture of various services products and materials. For example, hospitality, entertainment, transport and consumer goods market. Efficient cooperation, coordination and communication among all tourism enterprises become essential to offer a quality product. The lifespan of the tourism product is

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2 [http://wikibin.org/articles/etourism.html](http://wikibin.org/articles/etourism.html)

limited. For example, an empty room or an airline seat is an opportunity for sale which is rapidly discredited, an undeveloped availability cannot be stored for sale in future. The information is in the tourism nature. The right information, the right time to the right customer is competitive advantage between tourist business.

In general, the smooth and efficient operation of tourism industry requires reliable information regarding availability of tourist products as well as the cooperation between offering and demand.

Therefore, an efficient mechanism is required for exchanging information and financial resources in tourism economy, which makes electronic commerce inevitable necessity.

3. The relation between tourism industry and advertising.

The aim of this chapter is to describe and give a completed image of the importance of advertising in tourism.

It is known that advertising by its nature, is part of the services, as well as tourism is.

3.1 The concept of advertising in tourism

In this part, a reference will be made to the importance of advertising in tourism industry, as well as in the wider sector of advertisement.

“Advertising is a means of communication with the users of a product or service. Advertisements are messages paid for by those who send them and are intended to inform or influence people who receive them” (Advertising Association of the UK.)

Advertising can use emotional features (invocation of emotion), that connect the user with the purchase or the use of product and sometimes can use logical features (invocation of logic), such as the technical characteristics and advantages of the product compared with the competitors.

Regarding the tourism sector, advertising is the main way of direct projection, which aims to create positive and appealing impression on recipients to whom it is addressed, to persuade them to visit with the first opportunity this destination. In this effort, advertising as a process tries to impart to the consumer-candidate visitor the necessary messages using a variety of advertising media like the television, press, posters, Internet and brochures.

In most cases, tourists choose the destination without having seen it, especially many tourists visit the destination of their choice for the first time. As they have no personal knowledge of the destination, many tourists buy their vacation packages at the instigation of their friends, family or colleagues, but most of the times based on

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4 https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/definition/advertising
information provided by advertisements in the media or Internet, from TV spots and generally from advertising campaigns of various destinations.

So, Tourists are affected significantly by viewing and advertising, but also by suggestions being made by the travel industry. All that create motivation to the potential buyers, in this case tourists.

For that reason, the last years even bigger amounts of money are spent by tourist businesses for their advertising campaign. Well known tourism businesses can spend billions of euros a year to promote their services. Usually developed businesses have special advertising department which relates to the marketing direction and takes over, without the intervention of advertising companies, the process of a promotional campaign.

On the other hand, smaller businesses assign the management and conduct of the advertising campaign to sales and marketing department managers who cooperate with one or several advertising companies.

In Greek tourism sector, mainly the second case works, where usually the sales or marketing manager takes over the responsibility for defining the goals of an advertising campaign (in cooperation with the administration), as well as the informing of interested advertising companies and finally the selection of the most completed advertising proposal also the execution of the selected advertising program.

3.2 Advertising on-line

It is a fact that advertising is the depiction of each society in which it is formed, as well as the time in which takes part. On the other hand, Internet is undoubtedly a huge field of promotion and advertising products and services. Not only the amount of information that is transported on it, but also the number of people who are looking for information are all factors that confirm this assumption.

On-line advertising defined from Wharton University of Pennsylvania as: “Any activities that use the internet, perhaps among other channels, to create awareness, interest, desire, and/or action, for a particular product, service, or concept. As firms get better at using integrated marketing, it is becoming harder to sort out the effects of on-line advertising from more traditional off-line methods.”

It is a sector with huge growth, something that is confirmed by the fact that more and more businesses increase the percentage of money they invest for the advertisement of their products or services on-line.

Especially, the wide use of Internet nowadays as well as the global economic crisis that also appeared in Greece makes many business owners to wonder if it is worth it

5 http://kwhs.wharton.upenn.edu/term/online-advertising/
to spend some more money on advertising their businesses. For this reason, the focus is on Internet advertising.

The history of on-line advertising started back at the 90’s, For the first ads on the Internet email service was used. Some years later in USA the first digital magazine made its appearance on the Internet and hosted on its websites the first product and business promotional messages.

Today, for most forms of Online Advertising the World Wide Web Information Service is used because of low disposal costs, dissemination of information to a large audience but mainly due to the interaction of the specific conduit that provides businesses the ability to interact and have interpersonal communication with the consumers.

3.3 Key features of Online Advertising

At this point, it would be useful to quote some characteristics of Internet advertising, to make the concept clear and completely understandable.\(^6\)

With the World Wide Web is repealed after many decades the impersonal mass communication for the benefit of both the business and the public. From the business side, is feasible the desirable, for the responsible of advertising, the customers feedback and interaction. This means that the advertisers can immediately react to the reactions of consumers, as well as they have the possibility to do so, such as the number of people who viewed the ad, how they saw the advertisement and how much time they spent on it. Things change and the public side. Internet users exposed to advertising messages, they can control the quantity and type of information that they will get even the time they will dedicate to get this information. In other words, a kind of advertising dialogue is being established between the company and the audience characterized by exchange of information and impressions.

The ability to "interact" with the use of the Internet and of the World Wide Web has led to an audience that operates "actively" from the beginning until the end of the report on advertising message. In other words, the user chooses whether and when it will be exposed or not to the advertising message.

The Low Cost of Online Advertising is reported both in the cost of reaching the public as well as in the cost of the transmission of information. As mentioned above, the audience of Internet decides when and if will be exposed in the marketing message, thus the cost of approaching the public is being significantly reduced.

The ability of the potential buyers to be exposed to on-line advertising messages depending on the specific needs for information that each person has, changes the philosophy of advertising the recent years. Businesses and marketing managers, are currently oriented towards the needs and desires of each user individually, if this is

possible. According to this fact, is given the opportunity to the business and to the advertisers, easily and at low cost to redefine the content of each advertising message so that agrees with the needs and interests of the recipient from public.

In conclusion, it could be said that the Internet and its services used as advertising media introduce in advertising a new form of communication which has been a long-term goal for decades that simplify or diversify several complex decisions of the marketing managers in the context of media programming. Under some certain circumstances, Internet can contribute essentially in the projection of a company and to approach effectively the target audience of the business.

3.4 Promotion and Advertising on the Internet

In this section, will be mentioned some of the most basic forms of Internet advertising.7

It is a fact that, nowadays, several businesses especially tourist, resort to some of these forms depending on which one best suits their profile and the strategy they follow, to project the products or their services to the consumer.

3.4.1 On-line Advertising

This is the electronic appearance of the traditional advertising. The biggest part of the advertising belongs today to "Google" with the "Google AdWords" service.

“AdWords (Google AdWords) is an advertising service by Google for businesses wanting to display ads on Google and its advertising network. The AdWords program enables businesses to set a budget for advertising and only pay when people click the ads. The ad service is largely focused on keywords.”8

This is happening because billions of searches are being done every day through "Google". In a few words, attracts on its website users who really care about its content with commercial or professional purpose, since they were looking for something relevant and have chosen to follow that advertisement. “Google AdWords” is effective, targeted, transparent (full click analysis is provided, as well and mention of the keywords used by users to find the business), it is easy to control, Versatile, Fast and lastly hustle free.

About Facebook

Similarly, effective is the advertising in biggest social networking site of days, "Facebook".

7 https://managementhelp.org/marketing/advertising/
Mrinal Todi, University of Pennsylvania (2008)
https://repository.upenn.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=https://www.google.gr/&httpsredir=1&article=1054&context=wharton_research_scholars
Patricia Sorce, Adam Dewitz, (2007)
http://scholarworks.rit.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1022&context=books
8 https://www.webopedia.com/TERM/A/adwords.html
“Facebook is a social media website first developed by Mark Zuckerberg while he was a student at Harvard in 2004. Since its creation it has become one of the most popular social media sites attracting people of all ages from all over the world. To use the site, you must create a personal profile where you provide information about yourself that can either be made public or private, depending on your privacy status. Once your personal profile is created you can request friends, like pages, share articles with your friends that you have found and more. Facebook is a way to stay in contact with your friends or just your acquaintances.”

Facebook users are already in Greece millions, they spend a lot of time on this webpage and do billions of "clicks" every day. So "Facebook" is ideal space for digital advertising. In addition, it enables targeted advertising, since its users reveal it their age and interests in the system. Both "Facebook" and "Google AdWords" charge the advertisement with PPC (Pay-Per-Click) model advertising, according to which advertiser is charged only when the user clicks on the ad.

3.4.2 Newsletter Marketing

"Newsletters" are still an important tool for Internet Marketing.

“A set of individual email marketing messages, typically sent out in intervals, that coordinate with each other in the nature of their content and are sent with an overall objective in mind.”

In other words, these are the well-known promotional emails sent to the customers to promote a good or service. It can be used in two ways.

The first one is to attract a new clientele through mass sending the "newsletter" to as many as possible recipients, who are taken to the specific website (newsletter campaign). The second one is about keeping good and stable relationships with the existing clientele through the information about new services or offers (informative newsletter).

In each case, a “newsletter” should be tasteful and elegant, being displayed correctly on all e-mail readers as well as to eliminate the chances to be stuck in the junk or spam folder.

Furthermore, it would be useful the system through which all these emails being sent to keep some basic statistic of the effectiveness of the campaign, for example how many users opened the specific newsletter, how many placed a “flag” on it, how many sent it in spam folder also how many clicked on the affiliate links that were placed in the newsletter.

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9 [http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/Facebook.html](http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/Facebook.html)
10 [https://adwords.google.com/home/](https://adwords.google.com/home/)
   [https://www.portent.com/services/ppc/pay-per-click-explained](https://www.portent.com/services/ppc/pay-per-click-explained)
11 [https://www.mynewsletterbuilder.com/glossary/define/email-marketing-campaign](https://www.mynewsletterbuilder.com/glossary/define/email-marketing-campaign)
3.4.3 Social Media
Social networking sites, like Facebook or Instagram, attract millions of visitors daily, who interact through the various communication capabilities that they have provided. This fact is a great opportunity for on-line marketing. By creating that kind of communities with targeted interests can build new low-cost distribution channels.

3.4.4 Banners
“A web banner or banner ad is a form of advertising on the World Wide Web delivered by an ad server. This form of online advertising entails embedding an advertisement into a web page. It is intended to attract traffic to a website by linking to the website of the advertiser”12

Another online advertising feature is to post ad banners on highly visited websites. However, the performance of this approach is not clear. In fact, helps the company that uses it to make its name recognizable, but very hardly ever the user does a "banner click”.

Based on all the above, it would be easy to see that the Internet is extensively used by the tourism industry as a key factor of promoting and forwarding tourism products and services.

3.5 Promotion in Tourism
This section, refers to some of the methods used by tourism companies to promote their products and services. In addition to advertising, there are many other ways that the tourism industry chooses.

One method is Public Relation. According to Shennandoah Diaz, “Public Relation is the process of making a heartfelt connection between a person or organization and the people who can truly benefit from and care about their message. It’s an awareness of what makes people tick, facilitated by a desire to build communities, engage and discuss, and give voice to worthy projects. PR isn’t mass messaging, spinning truths, or a barrier between the public and the person represented. PR should make genuine connections.”13

In other words, the term "Public Relations in Tourism" means all those activities (other than advertising), that promote a tourist destination and harmoniously complement each advertising strategy. In a modern tourist destination, public relations are the integrated activity that effectively complements an advertising campaign.

It’s worth to mention that, previously public relations were a sub-unit of modern marketing, but nowadays are an integral part of the communication policy of modern and competitive businesses.

12 https://blog.bannersnack.com/beginner-guide-banner-ad/
13 https://heidicohen.com/public-relations-definition/
Another method is Sales Promotion. Today, sales promotion is what many companies consider to be the most important promotion.

Philip Kotler, defines: “Those marketing activities other than personal selling, advertising, and publicity that stimulate consumer purchasing and dealer effectiveness, such as display, shows, demonstrations, expositions, and various other non-current selling efforts, not in ordinary routine.”

In other words, sales promotion is a mix of different ways of motivating the costumers to buy in short-term specific products or services. Sales promotion activities can focus on people’s attention on something specific and therefore have a direct impact on sales. Sales promotion is an essential part of a marketing campaign for every small or large tourist business. Usually focuses on boosting sales, introduce to the public a new product or service or to respond to a competitor’s sales promotion campaign. Sales promotion as a technique aims to increase sales, targeting potential or even existing consumers. Usually Its duration is small and is usually used in tourism for seasonal activities or products.

Finally, the strongest method of all is Social Media. The use of social media is crucial for the hotel and Hospitality industry, it makes the difference, regarding this differentiation, in this case the hotels of Chalkidiki, gain competitive advantage through the personalization and the connection that is built between the company and the customers, the previous and the future ones. The hospitality sector is one of the most developed and profitable sectors in Greece. Most of the companies in Greece trying to adjust this development to gain profit and set themselves “on trend”.

4. The History of Social Media and the connection with Tourism

The roots of social media stretch far deeper than you might imagine (Drew Hendricks, 2013). When Web 1.0 appeared, nobody could ever imagine that could be the start of a new era. In the middle of the nineties Web 1.0 became popular, became a new channel of sharing information between people. Web 1.0 had complete absence of interactivity and communication between users, as a result, to be replaced some years later with Web 2.0.

Web 2.0 introduced in 2003-2004, some of the key attributes associated with Web 2.0 include the growth of social networks and bi–directional communication. Web 2.0 generally gave to Internet users the ability to share information and cooperate online without being qualified with special skills and knowledge about computers and networks. Some basic characteristics Web 2.0 has is the freedom of data,

participation, communication, involvement, building trust and confidence and the facilitation of people.

According to Steve Davis (2005), Web 2.0 is more a social revolution than a technological one, because of the changes they made in the way people interacted. As far as Web 2.0 allowed easy communication between the users of Internet aptly has been characterized as “Social Web”. The definition of Porter Joshua that, the Social Web is a set of social relationships that connects people through the World Wide Web, connects the Social Web with the contemporary Social Media. Some researchers characterize Web 2.0 as “Participative Web” because allows increased participation and interaction between users, also gives the opportunity to express themselves, to communicate, to create and contribute to development, evaluation and distribution of content on the Internet, transforming them from simple information consumers to actual producers. According to Wunsch-Vincent, Vickery (2007) one of the main characteristics of the Participate Web is User Generated Content (UGC). User Generated Content can be considered as the sum of all ways people use social media. Finally, UGC appears in many forms on the Internet for example an image, audio, video, customer feedback or educational content.

4.1 Social Networking

It is common than humans, have the need to communicate with each other. Therefore, we have the ability to do it than other animals do not. It is well known that communication plays a vital role in human life (Hope Speak, 2014). All people communicate, even our relationships are a field of communication. People always had the need to feel a sense of belonging to a community. This inherent power of humans for communication and the need of interaction with his fellows found a way out from social networking. According to many researchers social networking can be defined as the practice of expanding knowledge through the creation of links from people with similar interests. Social networking is therefore a basic human activity that has been endorsed by technological advances throughout history such as telephone, radio, postal services, internet. In the age of Web 2.0 we are in social networking is transforming into on line activity affiliated with technology services and software that allows people to communicate with others anywhere, anytime (Sacha Wunsch-Vincent, Graham Vickery, 2006). A new definition arises, the on line social networking, according to social networking is the act of interacting and connecting with others in a social online environment using a website. Nowadays, social networking takes place traditional mainly through electronic social media tools.

4.2 Social Media

One definition of social media is “the collection of tools and online spaces available to help individuals and businesses to accelerate their information and communication needs.” (Axel Schultze, 2009). Nowadays the term social network
has been identified with Facebook and internet, because of their strong appearance in the everyday life. However, the term social networks should not be treated as something innovative. In fact, personal human social networks existed already and were the before of new social networks with the contemporary form. Essentially, new social media tools have expanded human social networks. But what do we mean by social networks? “Social networks are online communities of people who share common interests and activities. They provide a user with a collection of various interaction possibilities, ranging from a simple chat, to multiple video conferences, and from the exchange of plain email messages to the participation in blogs and discussion groups.” In other words, social networks could be defined as a set of factors, for example human or organizations, and a set of bonds, like friendships, that represent a relationship between the factors. From the above definitions, it is understood that even a real family its very similar to a network with more or less strong bonds that keeps the family members rallied to a common purpose and a common ideology.

Social networks nowadays deliver the baton to online social networks or otherwise commonly referred to as social networking pages. “Social network sites are web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. The nature and nomenclature of these connections may vary from site to site.”

Naturally, tourism as an industry that is supported and depends on the information cannot remain unaffected by these technological developments. At this point, it would be useful to note that many local and regional tourism services invested significantly in these new technologies. All those social networking pages and blogs can contribute to the promotion of the natural wealth of a region “through the eyes” of someone who visited this area. Something like this will effectively create additional value for tourist services.

Social media provide to users a new generation of tools to enhance their personal expression and communication that are characterized from the active participation of users. The use of social media nowadays is the fourth most popular on-line activity with more than half billion users who share interests, are informed and entertained with the help of plenty applications.

At this stage of the study targeting a reference to the influence of Social Media in the tourist industry that will be analyzed each social media tool in detail, it would be particularly useful an extensive description of the role and importance of advertisement as strategic tool for tourism businesses to promote the services they offer.

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4.3 Causes of Social Media development.

It is a fact that the uses of social media are increasing rapidly and spreading in a variety of settings. At this stage, it would be useful to quote the reasons which led in the prevalence of Social Media in people’s everyday life.

It is a fact that *modern lifestyles* play a key role in the development of Social Media. A set of factors favored their further deployment, such as the movement of an increasingly large mass in the provisioning sector services and office jobs, the lack of free time, oppressive working timetables, the everyday stress and the isolation.

The beginning was through the use of e-mail, a relatively impersonal way of communication. Later, instant messaging appeared, where communication became more personal and immediate. After blogs followed, with the daily publicizing of events in a circle of people and lastly social networking sites appeared, being the main form of communication and in some cases, source of income.

Therefore, almost all aspects of people’s everyday life are now accessed with a simple "click" of the mouse. In this way, relationships created easier, are more relaxed and more "virtual".

A dominant position in the spread of Social Media also holds one many *economic factors*. The profits from the advertisements that appear on almost every website, is one of the main causes of the spread of social media today. This is a kind of targeted advertising, which makes the way of promoting products so profitable. “Ad targeting is an advertisement technique where advertisements are placed in specific areas of the screen to increase visibility and "clickability" or to give tailor-made ads based on the user’s past behaviors and preferences. Targeted ads are meant to reach certain customers based on demographics, psychographics, behavior and other second-order activities that are learned usually through data exhaust produced by users themselves.”

In fact, demographics and interests declared by users are used, usually, from companies-shareholders of social networking companies, which record users' preferences and display to them the appropriate advertisement. So, advertisers are being promoted to predetermined buying audience, bringing profits to companies where the different social networking sites belong.

Consequently, targeted advertising and the acquisition of a large volume of demographics are potentially the main reasons why large companies invest significant amount of money in Social Media.

4.4 Characteristics of Social Media

There are some features that, are comprised of the various social networking sites. Some of them are the following.

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16 [https://www.techopedia.com/definition/30295/ad-targeting](https://www.techopedia.com/definition/30295/ad-targeting)
Participation. Social media encourage contribution by anyone interested in participating in them. Through social media the distance between people is diminished.

Accessibility. Most Social Media invite public participation and users feedback on it. Social Media Promote annotation and evaluation, as well as information circulation.

Sociability. Social Media creates digital communities, enabling an easy and efficient discussion.

Connectivity (Connectability). Social networking sites are developed based on their ability to connect with other media while combining the coexistence of many different media on a web site.

5. Social Media and Tourism

It has now been shown that Internet communication and information, has a huge influence on consumers, especially regarding to the service sector. This is also the case in the tourist industry, as an increasing proportion of tourists rely more and more on the information they receive through the websites, as well as through views and experiences of relatives or friends resulting from discussions or through various webpages.

This trend comes out from the fact that tourists are not able to "try" the service before its consumption, which is also a weakness of tourism as a product. For this reason, they prefer to be informed, for the destination they are interested in, from reliable sources, for example from the opinion and experience of a person who has already visited the destination, to reduce uncertainty.

In addition, it is an important element that tourists take seriously the comments made from other people for a destination which is from personal experience and not a payment to simply do so. All of this has the effect that the information received by tourists is true compared to the advertisements promoted by tourism businesses.

Thus, it could be said that social media are emerging as key tools for promoting the country in the field of tourism, as the visitor’s eyes and experiences promote the tourist product in the best possible way.

5.1 How social media relate to tourism

It is a fact that recent developments in information and communication technology, have radically affected every form of business. The use of Internet and of "Web 2.0" as a basic means of communication, brought significant changes in the way businesses and customers act and interact with each other.

Therefore, the revolution of "Web 2.0" plays a key role in decision-making processes of businesses and consumers, as well as how Internet users act. Information is the "soul" of the tourism industry also the use of the "Web 2.0" applications has a
significant impact on tourism demand. At this point, it would be worth to mention that all the information provided to tourists is immediate connected with their needs, functioning as a key to successfully meet tourism demand.

The Internet and social networking sites have brought radical changes to travel industry, providing consumers with a new way of getting information about the desirable destination. This is accomplished by watching pictures and videos, through user feedback, who give them information that impressed them during the visit to that destination.

Through this way it is easier for tourists to plan their trips and seek the best tourist products according to their expectations.

In other words, Social Media allow to people to chat with other users for a broad network of issues, such as for each destination, travel agent, hotel, transport company and many other, giving them the opportunity to be informed based on real experiences and not on claims of an ad campaign.

At the same time, it should be mentioned how the companies that dealing with the tourism market have great benefits from services of social media. For this reason, hotels, airlines and all kinds of tourist businesses are becoming more and more active on their websites, having as an ultimate goal enhancing their business image in consumer consciousness.

Tourism businesses, hotels, follow the latest trends, for example promote the services they provide through various "blogs" while using Social Media to gather feedback, track trends, and provide information about their services.

Some tourist businesses such as hotels and restaurants, trying to take advantage of the latest developments in the sphere of social media. For example this development refers to services based on the geographical location of the user, which provide the opportunity to view a wide range of information related to hotels, restaurants, monuments, pharmacies, public transport and more generally mapped and located in the near area of the user.

To conclude, it could be said that compared to other markets, the travel and hotel sectors are ahead of the adoption of strategies involving the social networking of users on the Internet. This is mainly because there is a huge interest for consumer impressions and perceptions. However, businesses should not forget older people who are unfamiliar with technology.

5.2 Social Media and Tourism businesses

It is a fact that the crisis we are experiencing today is characterized as a permanent change in the economic, political and social environment and requires definitive adaptation to new data. Of course, this also has an impact on the tourist product, which is expected to bring radical changes in the way the destinations are promoted, as well as the businesses included in it. This also has a direct impact on the usage of
the Internet, since it is undoubtedly the most rapidly developing mean of promoting businesses across all sectors of the economy. For this reason, not only businesses, but also the Municipality and the Region need to invest directly in modern technological applications and in social networking tools for development of tourism.\textsuperscript{17}

At this point, it is worth to mention the fact that Greek businesses, as compared to those in the Western world, involved late in Social Media. When Greek businesses attended to do so, they choose an “unprofessional” way, using strategies for example “like my page and I will make offers for you”. These methods, however, are far from the spirit of the media of social network, based on interactive communication, especially among friends or even people who want to share information, experiences and opinions.

The big bet for businesses is therefore to understand that both effective communication with consumers and the best use of online world are the ones that will lead them to more effective promotion of their products. Thus, they should not perceive consumers as passive recipients of the advertising message, but as transmitters and people with opinion and the ability to judge.

Greece has advantages that can promote and develop even further its tourist product, but at the same time it also has serious weaknesses that do not allow the exploitation of tourism for development at national, regional and local level. The tourist product is based on the traditional model of mass tourism in the Mediterranean combines sun - sea - beaches and is no longer competitive as well new destinations in our wider region such as Turkey offer similar product at lower prices.

In conclusion, it could be said that tourism product has already changed radically and is expected to change even more in the years to come, having as their only path the Internet. Thus, businesses operating in this economic sector will now have to set the basis for their entry into the Internet to be ready to cope with the developments that will take place in the future.

5.3 Social Media and Hotel Industry

This section will focus on the hotel sector (which is also the subject of this dissertation) and how it uses Social Media to promote the services provided.

It is worth to mention, that hotels nowadays try to gain their independence from tour operators and take advantage of the unlimited possibilities that the Internet now offers. All offers and facilities are captured directly on the websites maintained by all hotel units and serious businesses on the Internet with very good results so far,

\textsuperscript{17}Andreas M. Kaplan , Michael Haenlein (2010)
http://michaelhaenlein.com/Publications/Kaplan,%20Andreas%20-%20Users%20of%20the%20world%20unite.pdf
as entrepreneurs themselves report. The direct client-to-client approach appears to perform in conditions of deep economic crisis.

At this stage, it would be useful to mention the fact that the hotel industry has not perceived and evaluated the power of social media to communicate with customers. This may be due to a variety of factors, such as Greece’s late entry into the new technologies or the familiarization of stakeholders with the Internet. Even the creation of an official professional website has been delayed for most of accommodations. A great boost has been given in recent years through resources made available through development programs. However, it is noticeable that many professionals, use social networking platforms for personal use but not for professional use and the development of their business. However, during the winter season, where the work is much less than in the summer season and therefore there is more leisure time, that could be time to prepare suitable conditions for communication with a wide audience of potential customers. Part of this audience, with the creation of a special relationship, will also be the "dedicated customers" that every business needs. At this point, it would be useful to emphasize that customer growth is not only achieved through the presence of Social Media.

It is now a fact that Social Media has become one of the most important tools for client interaction and is considered as one of the key elements that have an impact on organic and hierarchical search for a hotel.

The following are some of the most important reasons why every business interested in internet marketing should use social media.

Social Media is the fastest growing category of Internet marketing to attract new users.

Social Media offers businesses the opportunity to create a direct relationship with the customer, so they enjoy the ability to receive feedback on a regular basis and monitor how the customer reacts to the messages they receive.

Consumer Comments and Content Posted by the user continues to dominate Social Media. While the consumer feedback is critical for them hotels, Social Media go one step further on some other social networking channels.

In conclusion, therefore, it could be said that Internet activity is estimated to increase occupancy rates of hotel units at more than twice the rate (sometimes up to 50%) over others who do not take advantage of the opportunities it offers.

5.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Social Media in tourism

It is widely known that the Internet is a controversial point for its users. So, Social Media also gathers a variety of views. In This section will be mentioned both positive and negative elements of social media.

Social Media Advantages
The use of social networking sites in the tourist sector has resulted in a wealth of benefits not only for users and businesses themselves, but also for tourist destinations.

For the consumers

*Easy access to information about tourist products and services.* Nowadays, the tourist-consumer can easily from the comfort of his home, with just a click, to have access to a lot of information about the tourist product or service that interest them and this at no cost. By using the Internet, they do not need to contact a tourist agent to obtain the necessary information. In addition, tourists can exchange views and experiences among themselves through the various tourist sites.

*Information provided on tourist products and services in the nearby area.* The information that tourists receive from the Internet is better as they can visit many web sites places to form a more complete view. This is because information is usually accompanied by plenty photos and videos, as well as similar information, such as weather forecast, traffic and public transport. In addition, tourists can share experiences of people who have already visited the specific destination they are interested in, so they can learn about the product before they invest on it.

*Creating new markets or expanding the already existing ones.* This is because of its universal accessibility of Internet. Customers can retrieve information about a faraway located destination or for a hotel more easily. Also, due to lower costs, products become more attractive, increasing the number of people who can travel.

*Easy to use.* Due to the wide spread of the Internet, the access is feasible for a large percentage of consumers who know how to use it with ease.

*Ability to search for information directly,* within a few seconds and not in days or weeks. Because of technology, all processes are automated, resulting the response time to customer requests being significantly reduced.

*Direct and fast communication.* This is achieved both through continuous contact at any time with customers and through the provision of high quality services to them.

For tourism businesses

*Improvement of the image and competitiveness of the business.* The presence of a tourist business on the Internet is nowadays necessary. First, improves the image of the business as it presents itself as a modern enterprise that follows current trends and then improves its competitiveness as being accessible globally at the lowest possible cost.

*Economic benefits.* Economic benefits come mainly due to the sale of tourist products and services through the Internet which results in an increase in the revenue of the business. It is a direct sale of the products from the producer to the consumer without any intermediaries.


*Expanding to International tourism market.* This is because, with a minimum of capital easily and quickly, can a business find more customers, better suppliers and suitable business partners.

*Continuous improvement of the services provided.* The emerging development of technology leads to the development and improvement of the services offered by tourism businesses. Business processes are automated, making them simpler and faster.

*Better understanding of customer needs.* Something like this is based on research, interaction and collection of information. This results in better and more stable relationships with customers as they develop trust to the business mainly because of universal accessibility to its services at any time.

*Reduce costs.* This is mainly due to the reduction in advertising costs (no more promotional leaflets), of the reduction in the workforce (reservations and communication is on-line) and the overall increase in efficiency and effectiveness achieved using Information and Communication Technology in the tourism industry.

*Reliability.* Social media offer every tourist business the opportunity to develop a channel of communication with prospective customers. This means that they can resolve their potential problems before they decide not to use the services it provides. The ability to interact personally between the business and the consumer has now become very easy and inexpensive.

*For tourist destinations*

*Contribute to destination development.* This is because the freedom of destinations increased, which can be displayed on the Internet throughout the markets and not depend on travel agencies.

*The creation of new tourist destinations.* This is because the Internet, on the one hand, eliminates distances and targets individuals in any part of the globe, and on the other hand gives its users access to plenty of information (easily and at no cost). That results tourists being able to even discover "Forgotten" and not well-known destinations, thus contributing to regional development and creating new destination trends.

*Reduce the cost of advertising.* This is because most of the tourist destinations are now projected via the Internet and thus by Social Media without the intermediation of tour operators or tour operators and at a very low cost.

*Social Media Disadvantages*

*For consumers and businesses*

*Lack of security and reliability.* It is true that in many cases where users' personal data is given, the processing of such data may lead to a violation of the user's privacy - personal privacy, when not in accordance with the relevant provisions. Ensuring full
trust on the Internet is unfeasible, as it is a means everyone can access, no matter what its purpose. The risks may threaten not only the security each social networking site and its visitors, capturing important data such as credit card numbers and details, personal addresses or mobile phone numbers. In general, the issue of security is one of the biggest drawbacks of Social Media, which is almost impossible to overcome, thus discouraging a large percentage of tourists from booking their vacation through Internet.

*Lack of human contact.*

It is a fact that many consumers prefer to organize their trip through personal communication with a travel agent, rather than one electronic device. Human contact inspires greater confidence and security instead of the impersonal Internet transactions. This is most common on elderly people, because they didn’t grow up involved in technology, it’s more difficult to them fully adjust to new technologies.

*Non-personal contact with the product.* One of the biggest weaknesses in the use of e-commerce is the fact that the customer is not able to personally examine and feel the product before choosing it. It is quite complicated, therefore, to bring e-commerce closer to purchasing habits - consumer demands.

Some other negative facts could be for example that not all the potential buyers have access to Internet at all times. Also, the online presence requires constant care to maintain attractiveness and the concentration of user interest.

It is now known that the need for a business to maintain and improve its presence on social networking platforms is as important as the need for an effective website. Therefore, each company should have a presence in this kind of media. It is necessary for an entrepreneur to assign an employee the use of these tools if he wants to have fast and accurate results just like a person who is totally dedicated to developing and optimizing the business website.

The current trend is that more and more businesses are taking part in Social Media. Every entrepreneur should understand the value and capabilities of these tools. In Greece, people using them are growing at a significant rate. The entrepreneur who decides to invest to learn more about Social Media Marketing will achieve not only more traffic to his company’s website but also more sales, will find effective ways to connect with its existing clientele and new ways to promote its offers to both existing and potential buyers.

To conclude, every kind of business should enter the world of Social Media, taking seriously not only the advantages but also their disadvantages.

5.5 The Most Important Social Media in the Tourism Industry

There are plenty of social networking sites that can be used in the travel industry and specifically in travel planning. Based on the criteria and definitions mentioned above,
a categorization of the social networking services that are currently available to businesses and the wider population can be made. These are major starting points for any tourist business that seeks to follow a strategy through Social Media. These sites gather a large portion of fans, are registered by the major search engines and allow their content to fit on other websites.

First and most common social media used by tourism businesses in Greece, especially in Chalkidiki, which is the case study of this dissertation, is of course Facebook. In a previous chapter the definition of Facebook was given, so at this point some additional characteristics will be examined.

Facebook still after years, remains the most popular social service networking in many countries of the world, as well in Greece. Businesses, aware of Facebook's growth and potential, use it to exchange information, communicate and develop by promoting their products and services. In addition to its use by business as an advertising field to promote products and services, Facebook give the opportunity in businesses to extend to the creation of unlimited groups and groups without being charged.

The shift and trend of business towards social networks, encourages its employees to communicate with customers, to exchange information using Facebook. In addition, businesses can have a fan page through Facebook to promote services and products. In these pages, there is the possibility to post videos, photos, and contact information. Facebook's mode of operation and functionality has a lot to do with Google, while in our country is recorded universal superiority.

Let’s move on with Instagram, because through the results of the questionnaire that will be analyzed in the next chapter it is visible that takes the second place, of the Chalkidikis marketing managers, preference.

Instagram. Who doesn’t love Instagram. “Instagram is a free, online photo-sharing application and social network platform that was acquired by Facebook in 2012.” As most people first choose Facebook to find and connect with existing and potential customers, it’s important to say that Instagram is the communication channel with the most active and interactive user base. This for every business means that it is an excellent tool in which businesses can interact with users, create discussions, get feedback, and connect with new customers through comments while building new relationships. For example, businesses can publish a photo with a new product and ask for the user opinion. From the reviews, businesses will get important results to help them decide whether to improve or remove it. Something very helpful with Instagram is that you can share your business content on other channels like Facebook and Twitter. Now, creating an attractive product image or service and promoting it for sale has become a process that no one ever imagined would be that easy, especially on the tourism sector. Pinterest is a tool that be in the same category

19 http://searchcio.techtarget.com/definition/Instagram
with Instagram, because it is based on the image. Unfortunately, Greek businesses (especially in Chalkidiki) don’t prefer it, so there will be no thorough analysis.

LinkedIn. “LinkedIn is a social networking site designed specifically for the business community. The goal of the site is to allow registered members to establish and document networks of people they know and trust professionally.”\(^{20}\) In other words LinkedIn is a social networking site that focuses on business activities. It enables the new user to set up a network of business contacts while continuing to other actions such as business connections on the network. This means that users are expanding their business acquaintances. For businesses looking to promote their services, LinkedIn is a very useful tool. Through this, they create a network of connections, while entrepreneurs can significantly improve their profile within this community. When a company offers a service to another member of the community, it can give the last one a comment on the quality of its service. These comments are an important part of choosing a service provider as they can convince prospective customers and form an opinion.

Youtube. “YouTube is a free video-hosting website that allows members to store and serve video content. YouTube members and website visitors can share YouTube videos on a variety of web platforms”.\(^{21}\) Although not recorded as a "social" media in people’s mind, YouTube is one of the most popular internet destinations, it is the point where most searches are done on the Internet after Google. Every business needs to have a presence on YouTube, especially those that rely heavily on the image.

At the end, is Twitter. “Twitter is a free social networking service that allows registered members to broadcast short posts called tweets. Twitter members can broadcast tweets and follow other users' tweets by using multiple platforms and devices. Tweets and replies to tweets can be sent by cell phone text message, desktop client or by posting at the Twitter.com website.”\(^{22}\) Most hotels in Chalkidiki don’t use very much Twitter as a promotional tool and to get in touch with clients. Twitter by its nature as a tool has a characteristic of commending something that is happening at the moment, live.

6. Chalkidiki case study

The aim of this chapter is to conduct a survey on the impact of social media on hotel businesses of Chalkidiki. This study includes a case study of an area in our country that will highlight how social media can be used for the benefit of the hotels.

\(^{20}\) http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/LinkedIn  
\(^{21}\) http://searchcio.techtarget.com/definition/YouTube  
\(^{22}\) http://whatis.techtarget.com/definition/Twitter
“White sandy beaches from the most beautiful of Greece, crystal clear waters, pine trees with shade, 550 km of coastline. Chalkidiki "shouts" "summer" from kilometers”23

Chalkidiki region managed to maintain good networking with tour operators, “best deal” websites and tour operators. Also, in order to reach more customers, the marketing departments of the hotels in the region are preparing advertising campaigns. These are strategic moves to achieve the expected goal.

In order, the businesses be viable and clearly successful in the future, hotels of Halkidiki implement policies that stabilize goals while at the same time trying to make them higher. The management of the hotels in the area has developed an interaction with the social networking means and continues to constantly, from the very beginning of its operation, to renew its offers on the pages mentioned in the previous chapters.

In order to achieve this investigation, the following Questionnaire has been sent to the Social Media Managers of the 4 and 5 star hotels of Chalkidiki. In some cases where the hotels didn’t had Social Media Manager, the Reservation department or the General Manager of the Hotel filled the Questionnaire.

**Questionnaire replies**

1) What is your gender?

The majority of the respondents were women, their percentage came up to 75%, while men 25%.

![GENDER](http://www.kathimerini.gr/809014/article/ta3idia/sthn-ellada/xalkidikh-alliws)

Fig. 6.1

2) What is your age?

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23 http://www.kathimerini.gr/809014/article/ta3idia/sthn-ellada/xalkidikh-alliws
Most of the respondents were between 25 and 34 years old.

![Age Distribution]

**Fig. 6.2**

3) What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed? According to the results 75% of the respondents have Master’s degree, and the rest 25% have Bachelor’s degree.

![Educational Level]

**Fig. 6.3**

4) How long have you been in this job?

From the results of the questionnaire 25% work in the tourism industry in the current sector from 1 year to 3, another 25% over 4 years and 50% from 6 months up to 1 year.
5) What is your marital status?
All our respondents are single, that never been married.

6) Do you have Social Media Manager?
All the respondents answered that they have a social media manager in the hotel that they work.

7) Do you have Social Media Advertising and Marketing department?
As well as all the respondents answered that they have a Social Media Advertising and Marketing department manager in the hotel that they work.

8) Which Social Media Tools you are using to promote your business?
66,7% of our respondents answered that they use more than 3 Social Media Tools. The rest 33,3% answered that they use All the Social Media Tools, especially Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and Youtube.

9) Which are the most popular Social Media Tools for your business or have the best response from the clients?

66,7% of our respondents answered that the most popular Social Media Tools for their business is Facebook and Instagram. The rest 33,3% answered that is only Facebook.
10) The most popular Social Media tool for advertising your business?

All the answers were equal in this question 33,3% Facebook, 33,3% Instagram and finally Facebook and Instagram 33,3%

![Pie chart showing popularity of social media tools for advertising business]

Fig. 6.8

11) Do you follow your customers back?

66,7% of our responders answered that they follow their customers back on Social Media. The rest 33,3% answered that they definitely follow their customers back.

![Pie chart showing responses to following customers back]

Fig. 6.9
12) If you follow your customers back, on which Social Media platform usually? The 100% answered that they follow their customers back on Instagram.

13) Do you run any Social Media Campaigns, Promotions, Discounts or Contests? The 100% answered that they run Social Media Campaigns, Promotions, Discounts and Contests on Social Media.

14) If you run Campaigns, Promotions, Discounts or Contests what kind is the most common? 66.7% answered that they run last minute offers through Booking.com or from their business personal website, 33.3% answered that they have Special Booking days with discounts.

15) Do you have mobile Application? The 66.7% of our responders answered that they don’t have a mobile application of their business. Only 33.3% answered yes.

16) Do you use Social Media to engage with your customers to get evaluation or feedback? All the respondents answered yes. (100%)

17) If yes, you analyze the results of your customer evaluation? The 66.7% of our responders answered Yes. The rest 33.3% gave the answer No.

18) Do you make any surveys about customer satisfaction from your clients, do you sent any questionnaires or you have after care department?
The 66.7% of our responders answered that they use Questionnaires and 33.3% answered that they do surveys about their customer satisfaction.

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**Fig. 6.11**

19) Do you offer a loyalty program to frequent customers?

The 100% gave positive answer, that they offer loyalty programs to their repeaters.

7. Conclusions

Based on the creation of this dissertation, with the title: “Social Media Impact to 4-5 star Hotels in Chalkidiki”, on the creation of the questionnaire and other studies they already have been placed, I come to the following conclusions:

The research that has been conducted shows that Tourism and especially tourist facilities like hotels, and in this case, the 4 and five star hotels of Chalkidiki region, is one of the first branches, which have been influenced by the rapid development of technology. The tourist market is increasingly trying to benefit from technology developments and from Web 2.0 technologies. Through the creation of Web 2.0, many platforms and tools have emerged that help make it more popular, for instance Social Media, on-line advertising, electronic feedback from customers and all these tools that were analyzed in the previous chapters. Also, much of the advertising of tourist products is now being made over the internet. Using applications such as all social media of nowadays and especially Facebook and Instagram, as is being found out from the research through the questionnaire are the strongest ones for hoteliers located in Chalkidiki, businesses advertise their products. This kind of advertising is very useful, with a small range of costs but immediate results. Also through the famous social media platforms each tourist can write reviews, opinion and recommendations the tourism accommodations of the area. This gives the opportunity to the next prospective customers to have a first look at
the hotel they are interested in visiting. They are also given the opportunity to have easy access to tourist products and services around Chalkidiki, through their computer, but without any costs and being informed about the tourist product.

Then, by creating a questionnaire and based on the answers given to me by social media managers in the Chalkidiki region I notice the following, based on the impact of Social Media to 4-5 star hotels of Chalkidiki, all the hotels that participated in the survey had Social Media Manager that took care of the social media accounts of the hotel, as well as Social Media Advertising and Marketing Department.

The majority of the hotels that participated in the survey use more than 3 kinds of social media to promote the business, including Facebook, Instagram, Youtube and at last Twitter. Then on the most famous social media tool for their business, in other words the one that has the greatest response from customers, most hotels of the area answered that the most prevalent ones are Facebook and Instagram, that comes to confirm the initial case that it would be those two tools. According to them Facebook and Instagram are more direct with the user and where the image prevails as a means of information, it is known that an image is a thousand words.

Then the most famous social media tool for the advertising of hotels in Chalkidiki is Facebook, Instagram and Facebook – Instagram together. Here the responses are equal which gives the understanding and confirmation of our initial assumptions that hotel businesses in Chalkidiki prefer advertising through Facebook and Instagram which has made a significant rise over the past few years.

Then all responded positively that they are following their backs in the social media. With 33.3% being strong supporters of this logic, which proves that they are seeking to develop a personal relationship with their customers to make them repeaters, in a sort meaning, to invest in them. Also 100% replied that this tactic is mainly used through Instagram. Moreover 100% of the respondents run special campaigns and set specific days that the customers can book their accommodation with some discount. The most common ones are last minute offers through Booking.com or their personal official booking page. The research through the questionnaire shows that baby steps are being made from the hotels of this specific region to build their own application for the hotel, so the customers can book easily through their mobile phones or have easy contact with the hotel. All of the participants use social media to engage with the customers, get evaluation and feedback, then they analyze the results of the evaluation so they can point out the weaknesses and find solutions. Many of them use questionnaire forms, that the customers find in the rooms, because it is easy to collect them and some personalized solutions are given on time, while the customer is still in the hotel. Lastly, all the hotels have a loyalty club where offer specific deals for their frequent customers.

Overall this research has demonstrated that Social Media tools and its uses works together with the hotel industry of Chalkidiki region. To summarize and regarding the research, Social Media Tools, Internet and new technologies has a significant role
in any contemporary hotel industry, entrepreneurs, and hotel operators who want to be successful in the specific hospitality sector should pay great attention and invest to that.
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Appendix

Questionnaire

Demographics.

1) What is your gender?
   a. Male
   b. Female

2) What is your age?
   a. 18 – 24
   b. 25 - 34
   c. 35 - 44
   d. 45 - 54
   e. 55 - 64
   f. Over 65

3) What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?
   a. High School graduate
   b. Bachelor’s degree
   c. Master’s degree
   d. Doctorate degree

4) How long have you been in this job?
   a. less than 6 months
   b. 6 months - 1 year
   c. 1 - 3 years
   d. over 4 years

5) What is your marital status?
   a. Single, never married
b. Married or domestic partnership

c. Divorced

Main Questions

6) Do you have Social Media Manager?
   a. Yes
   b. If NO please write below who is doing this job for you

7) Do you have Social Media Advertising and Marketing department?
   a. Yes
   b. No

8) Which Social Media Tools you are using to promote your business?
   a. Facebook
   b. Instagram
   c. Twitter
   d. Youtube
   e. More than 3 from the above
   f. All the above
   Other: ________________

9) Which are the most popular Social Media Tools for your business or have the best response from the clients?
   a. Facebook
   b. Instagram
   c. Facebook and Instagram
   d. Facebook, Instagram and Youtube

10) The most popular Social Media tool for advertising your business?
a. Facebook
b. Instagram
c. Facebook and Instagram
d. Other: ____________

11) Do you follow your customers back?
   a. Definitely Yes
   b. Yes
   c. No

12) If you follow your customers back, on which Social Media platform usually?
   a. Facebook
   b. Instagram
   c. Other: ____________

13) Do you run any Social Media Campaigns, Promotions, Discounts or Contests?
   a. Yes
   b. No

14) If you run Campaigns, Promotions, Discounts or Contests what kind is the most common?
   a. Special booking days with discounts
   b. Last minute offers through Booking or your personal official booking page
   c. None
   d. Other: ____________

15) Do you have mobile Application?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. No, but I am planning to have one soon.
16) Do you use Social Media to engage with your customers in order to get evaluation or feedback?
   a. Yes
   b. No

17) If yes, you analyze the results of your customer evaluation?
   a. Yes
   b. No

18) Do you make any surveys about customer satisfaction from your clients, do you sent any questionnaires or you have after care department?
   a. No
   b. Questionnaires
   c. We have after care department
   d. We do surveys about our customer satisfaction
   e. Other: ________________

19) Do you offer a loyalty program to frequent customers?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Other: ________________